Gulf Gender Alliance

Renaissance Chapter

The Flip Side

Vol. VII, No.6 — *Serving the Gulf Coast Transgender Community* — *June 2000*

DIANE'S DIARY

Diane Tanner

Diane's Diary

Our May meeting was a good evening for socializing and I was pleased to note the Board's almost perfect attendance. We extend a warm welcome to our newest visitors and hope to have both Geni and Ben returning in the near future. With the good turnout, we were able plan for several upcoming activities.

First up was the PFLAG scholarship awards event on Mother's Day. We ended up with a nice hand full of GGA members helping to sell raffle tickets. We sold a bunch. As always, the buffet spreads and Champagne were wonderful and I think everyone enjoyed the upbeat atmosphere.

We continued planning our picnic at Lucette's house. We ended up having a house full of people and I'm sure no one left hungry unless they were dieting. It was good to see several of our Mississippi members and guests who we haven't seen in awhile - though we missed a few. It was a nice opportunity to catch up on each other's latest news.

We firmed up the June schedule and will be having a demonstration on laser hair removal at our next meeting. Due to the demo set up, the normal "changing room" will not be available during meeting times. We are continuing to explore Baton Rouge meeting locations for July and August, but the search so far has helped us to better appreciate our current accommodations.

As my recounting shows, May proved to be a very busy month of extra-curricula activities and events. Throw in such things as MAC (Mayors Advisory Committee) and LGCCNO meetings, various committee meetings, and NTAC discussions - time really flew. As one note for the Community Center, Summer Safari will be held this year at Café' Brazil on Frenchman St. on Friday June 23rd (which is a block from the former Rubyfruit Jungle). Yes, that's right -Rubyfruit closed suddenly in early May without fanfare. We sadly regret the closing of the sole Lesbian (mainly) Bar in the French Quarter area.

A final note. The first ever LGBT high school prom was held recently in New Orleans and sponsored by PFLAG. This was a special event, but it was made even more notable by the fact that the big daily paper in New Orleans, "The Times-Picayune", had a 3/4 page color picture of the event on the cover of a recent Living section. It was accompanied by a positive article describing issues in school and the formation of two GLSEN (Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network) chapters in the state.

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For The Record

Crystal Little

Hi Girlfriends!

Well here I am again. I know that I have been very inconsistent in getting to meetings lately, and getting something in the newsletter.

There has been so much going on in my life lately, that it gets difficult to do everything that I should.

This past year being the co-chair at Community Center has taken a lot of time, also being with the Hate Crimes project. At times it is very difficult doing so much but I love what I am doing; it is so important.

No particular subject today, I think that I will just ramble around a bit, and hit many things. The big news is that Rubyfruit Jungle has closed its doors. This happened three weeks ago without any notice, and left employees and customers totally stunned. As of the evening. of the 19th, the doors were reopened, but not as Rubyfruit Jungle. The bar is now open as a non-gay venue. There has been much discussion on this event and In will keep everyone posted as things develop.

Here it comes!

Summer Safari, is about ready to start. With the closing of RubyFruit Jungle, we were left in a bit of a dilemma as to where to go. So now Summer Safari will travel around, as safari's do. This year we are going to take a trip Up the Amazon. at Café' Brazil on Frenchmen St.. Most everyone knows where it is. It is in the second block towards the river from Rubyfruit. Our special thanks

go to the owner for his kind generosity. So it will be a great event, lots of food and entertainment. And our own Noelle, and the 'Boys Will Be Girls' troupe will also be appearing. My thanks to them also. Updates will follow. I do hope the GGA is well represented.

My next favorite subject. That's right. Pride Fest 2000. Things are moving along quite well in that department. This year we will be at Armstrong Park again. If you liked last year, you will really love this year. We are wanting much more local vendors, and entertainment. If you know someone in either category please have them contact me at the usual number or e-mail. And of course we will need volunteers. I think the GGA should be able to take the best truck award again this year. What do you think?

Well I think that I must have taken up about half of the paper by now so I reckon that I had better close. I am planning on making the June Meeting, for sure.

See you all then.

Hugs

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E-MAIL LISTINGS

(E-Mail Corrections to TiaC@juno.com)

GGA: Info@gga.org; Presidentc@gga.org

GGA Web Site: http//:www.gga.org

Dr Dianne Bailey: dbbailey49@hotmail-.com

Robyn C: CCTWINS@aol.com

ICTLEP: ICTLEPHDQ@aol.com

Sandy S: SANDYCCE@aol.com

JoAnn D: JRDET@mindspring.com

Crystal Little: CrysGGA@juno.com (Crystal is back on e-mail)

Lucette Worrel: luworrel@aol.com

Nancy B: Webmistress@gga.org

Carla Wild: CarlaW591@aol.com

Nancy S: Stressgone@aol.com

Shoe Express: West@shoexpress.com

Michelle Ryan: MichelleRy@aol.com

Cissy Conley: TiaC@juno.com

Lee Mymick: nuttslanding@juno.com

Chris K.: Chrise@concentric.net

http://www.concentric.net/~chmse/IN-`EX.HTML

Marie Denise Gallagher: ladym1871@aol.com

Bobbie N. Hougland: Nicole2u@aol.com

Donna & Shirley O: pttlov@bellsouth.net

Allison Thomas: designs@fastband.com

Noelle F: Noellextv2000@aol.com

Jenni Beer: Jennijoyride@aol.com

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LAGNIAPPE!

{This is your column! The articles submitted are generally from our readers. We will publish your pet peeves; yes!, even your positive comments if you happen to like something we've done. etc. It doesn't have to be more than a line or two, if long enough, we will normally publish it as a full article. It can be marked 'anonymous', but we do need to know who it was submitted by. It can even be a 'personal' as long as it fits our general policy as outlined in the bylaws and as summarized in our outreach brochure.-ed}

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Lee Frances Heller

The family of Lee Heller has asked me to contact all of her friends that I can to let them know that Lee went home to be with the Lord this morning, around 5 am. Apparently she went very peacefully in her sleep.

For those of us who loved Lee, we shall all deeply miss her. I knew her for about 25 years and have been honored to be known as her friend--she had a very special place in my heart as I know I did in hers too. And I know how very much Lee treasured all of her friends.

The family tells me there will be no services.

Please pass this news along to anyone who is not on this list but whom you believe would like to know.

Blessings to all,

Ginger Smith

{Later information advised that there is to be a memorial service in Jackson, primarily sponsored by her transgendered friends. Several GGA members plan to attend and we did send flowers. The information was passed by e-mail, telephone and a web site posting for those known to be interested-ed}

For those who know Lee Frances Heller the retired transgendered minister from Jackson, MS and author of 'Christian Love Letter' and previously 'Grace and Lace', this news will cause great sadness. I have personally known Lee for close to 20 years and will miss her dearly. Lee was 82 this past Spring, I think.

Cissy

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Lee Brewster Passing

Received from DAINNA@aol.com

Forwarding from other friends:

For those who did not know, Lee Brewster was one of the foundation cornerstone people for the modern TG community. Her work on behalf of the community helped many TGs to know they were not alone in the world -- that there were others who felt as they did -- in the days before mass communication brought us all together as one

I just received this from Cena:

I heard from a friend that Lee Brewster passed away yesterday. A memorial service is being planned at the Mardi Gras Boutique sometime in June.

Lee -- we will miss you! Thank You for having been a Special Friend to all of us, with a Special Vision of who we could all become!

Lee Brewster bio information, also from <DAINNA@aol.com>:

Back in the "Dark Ages" Lee founded a transgendered boutique called Mardi Gras, that catered to the TG community (before it was called that) mostly by mail order, but some via walk-in for the people who were brave enough .... She did a lot of magazine advertising for her store, which was -- for many of the TGs then -- the first clue that they were not alone in how they felt; that there were options beyond Christine Jorgenson's SRS. It was a point of contact -- even on a fantasy basis for those too closeted`to write to Lee -- that the internet fills today for first-contact information. She helped Virginia Prince to get her writings further out into the world, and also advertised in Virginia's magazines and books...

Much of Lee's "stuff" in the boutique was geared toward crossdressers and fantasy and "drag queen" stuff, but that's all there was back then besides SRS, for all we knew..... It was a starting place. She also helped to pro-

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AURORA

Melanie Cuevas
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(ritareno01@aol.com)
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Jeffrey T. Reeder
Attorney at LaW
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Beeper 551-3957 Fax 488-6302
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Sexual Dysfunctions

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This newsletter is a monthly publication of the Gulf Gender Alliance(GGA) a *RENAISSANCE CHAPTER*. Articles and information contained in this newsletter may be reprinted by other non-profit transgender organizations without advance permission, provided a copy is sent to Gulf Gender Alliance within 2 months after the material is published and proper credit is given to author and source.

The opinions or statements contained in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Gulf Gender Alliance. Contributions of articles and ads are welcomed, but may be altered in the editing process with the author's intent retained, or may be rejected, whether solicited or not. Absolutely no sexually explicit material will be accepted or printed. *Submissions of more than one page should be accompanied by an ASCII (or DOS text) file on 3.5" IBM/MS-DOS compatible diskette. (Word Perfect up through 9.0 also)*

The Gulf Gender Alliance is a non-profit support group for transgendered persons. Spouses and significant others are welcomed and are encouraged to participate. Also, members from related organizations, helping professionals, and approved guests are welcome when cleared through GGA's officers. *Dues are $25/year for active membership and $15/year for associate membership or newsletter only.*

We will exchange newsletters with any similar group. Groups that do not send a newsletter for 6 consecutive months may be dropped from the mailing list. Members who do not bring their dues current within 1 month of their expiration date may also be dropped at the board's discretion.

Our phone is: (504) 943-1999.

All Club correspondence should be sent to: **GGA**
P.O. Box 56836
New Orleans, LA 70156-6836

Submit articles and ads to:
Cissy G, Conley
P. O. Box 5085
Biloxi, MS 39534-0085

All advertisements and articles must be received by the Thursday following the second Saturday of the month. Otherwise, expect an additional months delay.

Comments noted with -ed or {ed} are from the Flip Side Staff and should not be construed as belonging to the author or any other source.

Our E-Mail address is: Info@GGA.org. Send news articles to TiaC@juno.com

GGA CALENDAR-2000

June 10th-	Regular Meeting
June 23rd-	Summer Safari
June 24th	Diva of the Night

Drag Ball $15---2300 Charteres
(See Tara for reservations)

July 8th-	Regular Meeting
August 12th-	Regular Meeting

{See members insert for more information on Regular Meeting locations}

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::::::::Meeting Notice::::::::

If you wish to attend a GGA Meeting, please contact us at the aforementioned address or call us at:
(504) 943-1999

This month's regular meeting will be held June 8th in our usual location in the Greater New Orleans area. For those desiring to dress in the room, it is usually open by 3:30 - 4 p.m. Board of Directors meeting is at 6:30 p.m. and General Membership Meeting at 7:15 p.m. Meeting location information is included separately for members or guests who have been interviewed.

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Vice-president	*Crystal Little*
Secretary/Treasurer	*Cissy Conley*

Board of Directors

Diane T, Crystal L, Cissy C, Jo Ann Drusilla, Nancy B, Michelle Ryan & Shirley O.

mote Fantasia Fair, the first convention /conference/gathering of TG people..... If my memory serves, she even helped to bankroll the first several FanFair events in Provincetown. Her influence toward the fantasy aspects of the M2F TG experience still color that event every year, even now almost 30 years later.

Many of the girls who went to P-Town nearly 30 years ago, and every year after that they could, laid much of the foundations for what the community has become today. For example, IFGE's Winslow Street Fund was conceived and started in P-Town by a group of girls staying at the Chicago House, on Winslow Street. If you are not aware, FanFair in P-Town has the unique distinction of being held in the whole city, rather than in a conference hotel; P-Town does not have a conference hotel, or 'any' big hotel for that matter. Attendees stay in various bed & breakfast places, each with its own unique atmosphere, and workshops are held in various restaurants and bed&breakfast meeting rooms around the city -- attendees have to interact with the city and with real people, just by being there.

Its what Lee and Ari Kane wanted the girls of the TG community to have, to be, to do... To be out in the public eye as a normal person, rather than in a closet filled with shame somewhere. (Ari Kane is the progenitor of the Fair, by the way....)Gender Advocacy Internet News (GAIN), a free Internet news service, brought to you courtesy of Gender Education and Advocacy, and It's Time, America! Material distributed via GAIN is for research and educational purposes only and is not to be used for commercial gain. <gain@tgender.n et >.

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"LION KING SIMBA"

<pagen767@hotmail.com>

Dearest Redneck Son...

I'm writing this slow because I know you can't read fast. We don't live where we did when you left home. Your Dad read in the newspaper that most accidents happen within 20 miles of your home, so we moved.

I won't be able to send you the address because the last family that lived here took the house numbers when they moved so they wouldn't have to change their address.

This place even has a washing machine. I'm not sure it works so well though. Last week I put a load of clothes in and pulled the chain. We haven't seen them since. I hope they come back soon, like I told your dad we shouldn't have to wear the same clothes more than a week.

About that coat you wanted me to send; your Uncle Billy Bob said it would be too heavy to send in the mail with the buttons on, so we cut them off and put them in the pockets.

Bubba locked his keys in the car yesterday. We were really worried because it took him two hours to get me and your father out.

Your sister had a baby this morning, but I haven't found out what it is yet, so I don't know if you are an aunt or uncle. Uncle Bobby Ray fell into a whisky vat last week. Some men tried to pull him out, but he fought them off and drowned. We had him cremated. He burned for three days.

Three of your friends went off a bridge in a pickup truck. Butch was driving. He rolled down the window and swam to safety. The other two were in the back. They drowned because they couldn't get the tailgate down.

There isn't much more news at this time. Nothing much out of the normal has happened.

Your Favorite Aunt

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KAREN'S KORNER

Karen Louise Scott

We had a nice May meeting. Much of the meeting was spent on planning upcoming events. We had two new prospective members, Ben from New Orleans and Gina from here on the coast.

From all accounts, it sounds like the party at Lucette's was a success. A pretty day, good food, and good friends always makes for a good time.

I'm very sorry I couldn't be there. I had a form of the summer flu; I was all set to go, the watermelon was cold, I had a pretty outfit to wear, but woke up feeling like a frying pan used for target practice.

There were some new people there and some who haven't been able to come too often. I'm glad that Crystal and Chris K. were able to make it.

It was sad to hear about Lee Frances. I never met her, but did enjoy her newsletters. They were very nice, uplifting and refreshing and carried with them the feeling of Lee Frances's wonderful and caring personna.

Again, I wish I could have been at the party. Things like the flu aren't known for coming along at a convenient time.

Have a good month. See everyone next time.

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University of New Orleans

May 12 2000

Ms Karen L. Scott

Gulfport, MS

Dear Karen

I am very grateful that you were willing to take extra time out of your already busy schedule so offer us your wisdom. My students were very impressed with your presentation. I hope that the attached letter is an adequate representation of the meaning your talk had for us and our gratitude.

Thanks again. I'll look forward to seeing you again soon.

Peace,

Peter B. Anderson, PhD,

Professor

{Karen, Lee and former member Barbara hosted a panel discussion on transgender behavior and lifestyles at Dr Anderson's 'Human Sexuality class recently.-ed}

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Dear Karen

I would like to thank you for coming to speak with our class.

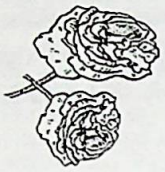
I enjoyed your openness in expressing your past and feedings. I know that it must be tough to be so open about a situation with such criticism in our society. Keep your pride and always remember to look for the bright side. It is always nice to have someone come speak to the class personally, rater than us reading about the topic or hearing second hand. I remember your speaking about how you felt you didn't fit in. You talked about how you were always interested in women's dresses, women's shoes, etc. That must have been difficult growing up feeling different than what 'society' wanted you to be. It must have taken a great deal of courage to take the step out into

the world.

So, once again, I would like to thank you and say how much we appreciated and benefitted from you coming to speak to our class. Good luck in the future and may God bless you.

Sincerely,

Jessica



.FROM THE STENOPAD

Cissy Conley

I imagine most have heard by now of Lee Frances Heller's death on June 19th. If not, there is some information in the Lagniappe column. Many of us knew Lee, if not personally, through her Grace and Lace and Christian Love Letter publications.

Lee's publications provided comfort to those in the transgender community who had religious issues with crossdressing. Her 'Christian Love Letter' went to well over 200 subscribers worldwide. By the time you read this, several of us will have attended a memorial service for her in Jackson. Rita, Sissy Spencer and I are planning on attending as of this writing. Diane had wanted to go, but her business affairs would not permit. Lee was a retired minister and had moved to Jackson to be near to her sons. Turned out that they were transphobic, so that didn't go too far. Lee worked as long as she could but eventually had to rely on social security. When her health began to fail, she had to have a home health care nurse come in two or three times a week to help. This is the Susie whom she mentioned in her monthly columns. She also had a next door neighbor Marge that was a long standing friend and mutual supporter. There was to have been no service, but some of her true friends, including those in our community, have made one possible.

There was another Lee that died last week, Lee Brewster, who is also given space in our Lagniappe column. I had met Lee back in the '70's through her Mardi Gras tours for transgenders to New Orleans. This Lee was also a strong community supporter, as the article states.

Board Meeting The Lords of Leather are holding a drag ball (Diva of the Night) on June 24th at 2300 Charteres. The tickets, available from Tara, are $15 and there will be a cash bar. Those interested in performing should also contact Tara. Her phone number is listed on the 'Members Insert.'

At the time of the meeting, we were planning a laser hair removal seminar for the June meeting. We have since learned that it has had to be postponed. JoAnn is trying to locate us a suitable location for a Baton Rouge meeting in July. This had not been confirmed at press time.

The remainder of the board meeting dealt with planning the Lucette Lawn Party which is now history.

General Membership Meeting Diane announced the preceding events and also asked for volunteers for the PFLAG scholarship champagne reception that was held the evening following the meeting.

NATIONAL EVENTS

Events can be posted up to 1 year in advance. All events have been posted through national advertisement or direct contact from the promoter. GGA accepts no responsibility for the accuracy or content of these items.

Be-All
June 7-11
Cincinnati, Ohio
www.transgender.org/beall
beall2000@mail.com

Kindred Spirits
8th Annual Soltice Circle
Black Mountain, NC
August 17th-20th
395 Lakey Gap Acres
Black Mountain, NC 28711
hollyfairy@juno.com
(828) 669-3889
www.TranSpirits.org

Renaissance 4th Intl Conf
Crossdressing, Sex & Gender
Oct 5th-8th
Philadelphia, PA
(610) 975-9119
www.ren.orgt/4thcongress

Planting Loving Seeds - June, 2000 The Mulch Pile Ministry - Seeing With Your Heart

Rachel Miller

Addressing the spiritual issues of those who feel excluded from the church because they are different in some way seemed an ultra-clear direction for me. It presented an opportunity to use my experiences as a cross-dresser to benefit others who have been disenfranchised for any number of reasons. Yet after penning the initial article, my ideas froze in mid-thought. I found myself embarked on a major new journey with no story line. Had I taken the wrong trail? Eventually it became apparent that it was the right trail, but I was missing the backpack containing everything I needed for the trip!

I had become comfortable by E-mailing intellectual tidbits from the safety of my computer. I wasn't experiencing anything new. Whatever value my book and articles have had, has come from recounting what I have learned by actually doing something. While I had corresponded with my pastor about a ministry, I had failed to make a personal commitment to take any specific action.

That condition changed a few weeks ago when I proposed launching what I called the "Mulch Pile Ministry" at our church. Its focus is on creating loving relationships based on truth. The following is a lightly edited version of the letter I sent to my pastor. Since writing it I feel that I'm finally back on the right path and expect that these articles will follow the trail of my actual footsteps. Hopefully others will see value in them and widen the trail into a well-traveled route providing spiritual relief to many in desperate need. I hope you'll decide to pack your bags and make

a similar trip.

Best wishes,

Rachel

I am proposing the creation of a new ministry to help meet our purpose of leading people into a personal and growing relationship with Jesus Christ through our value of authentic community; i.e. encouraging people to develop loving relationships based on truth.

I spent most of my life wrestling with the issue of cross-dressing yet felt that the church was the very last place to seek help. Rather than an outflow of God's love and acceptance, I had found judgment and condemnation. The projection of that attitude tended to keep me away from church and became a barrier to a loving, intimate relationship with my Creator.

Unfortunately many people, carrying all types of burdens, share a similar experience. Even though the Gospels proclaim the Good News of God's unconditional love, many continue to feel excluded and believe that the church does not help those who are outside the normal boundaries. Many have found help elsewhere but it is devoid of any significant spiritual foundation.

At our Inquirer's class (a class for people considering joining the church) you said that the essence of the church is to make it big enough to let everybody in. Ever since, I have heard continual messages of love and inclusion from you and the rest of the staff. One paragraph from your book struck a chord deep within me -- "There is nothing that provides more freedom

and security than knowing that someone has honestly seen you without your protective walls and still loves you. A deeper, richer relationship can blossom from persevering in the mulch pile of real life." It made me realize that if the church provided that sort of truthful, loving environment, we could find God's lasting answers rather than the superficial answers of the secular world.

My proposal is to start a Mulch Pile Ministry where those who have lived or are living in the "avoidable world" (in a recent sermon he talked about how we avoid people who make us uncomfortable because they are different) you recently described, can come together to practice God's love for each other without our customary protective walls. The song Let the Walls Fall Down was introduced at my first Sunday service and would be a great theme song for this ministry.

I have lived this life of shame, guilt and pain and shed tears of compassion for others that are still suffering. My writing and speaking in the transgendered community (also the educational and medical communities) has focused on helping others. Telling my secret freed me from its bondage and making myself vulnerable encouraged others to share their burden with someone they could trust. I want to tell my story as a way to start this ministry and to help others find God's yoke of peace. I believe that this is my spiritual home and that working in this area is my spiritual gift. I have the passion and commitment to stay the course. I am anxious to work with you and other members of the church to implement this idea so please let me know how to proceed.

Notes:

If you want to achieve a better understanding of the issues faced by cross-dressers (transvestites) and other transgendered people,

http://members.aol.com/rachelmill/bobo.htm

Balance

LadyM1871@aol.com

Once upon a time in the Kingdom of Heaven, God was missing for six days.

Eventually, on the seventh day, Michael the archangel found him resting.

Michael asked, "Sir, Where have you been for the past six days?"

God replied, "Behold Michael. I've taken the last six days to create a planet. It is a planet of Life, Beauty, and Balance. I will call it Earth."

"A planet of balance?" inquired Michael, "Sir, I'm afraid that I don't understand what you mean."

"Let me show you," said God. With this God took Michael closer to Earth and began pointing out features to him. "See Michael, there is balance between Northern and Southern Europe, where Northern Europe is cold and Southern Europe is warm. The Middle East is desert and hot, the tropical rainforests are wet and rainy, Antarctica is cold and ice. You see, BALANCE."

"I see!" exclaimed Michael. "This is wonderful, sir! But what is that large area in the center of North America?"

"Ah" said God, "that's Texas; a beautiful place of ocean, lakes, rivers, streams, mountains, desert, and tall prairie. Her people will be the most beautiful, most intelligent and most humorous. They will be world travelers, sociable, diligent and hardworking. Texans will be known throughout the world as diplomats and carriers of peace."

"But sir," Michael interjected, "what about **Balance**? You have balance throughout the rest of Earth and none to balance the Texans?"

God smiled and said, "Wait until you see all the idiots I'm surrounding them with in New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana."

First Annual Review of Gender & Sexuality Law

Courtesy Nancy B.

The Georgetown Journal of Gender and the Law is proud to announce the forthcoming release of the First Annual Review of Gender and Sexuality Law.

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Georgetown University Law Center

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Washington, DC 20001

202.662.9460 (voice)

202.662.9491 (fax)

gjgl@law.georgetown.edu

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From GAIN - Gender Advocacy Internet News <gain@gender.org>

Intersex infants:

an open letter to GIRES

Claire McNab

claire@siberia.demon.co.uk

{I received an inquiry regarding the Johns Hopkins Study on Intersexed Children. I hope this is an acceptable substitution-ed}

The following is an open letter from me, as an individual, to Bernard Reed, in his capacity as the Chair of the Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES). I have discussed its contents with several people, but will leave to others to decide whether they wish to be associated with it.

Dear Bernard

I am writing in response to the proposals you circulated last month on "Medic management of intersexed infants" (cop attached below), and `GIRES's request for comments.

I want to say at the outset that I do believe that these proposals are well-intentioned. I do believe that GIRES genuinely intends to help, but nonetheless I find your suggestions very seriously flawed both in concept and in detail. After much consideration, I have to conclude that they do not form even a satisfactory starting point for such work. I hope that you will consider very carefully my request for you to stop this process, and start again from the beginning, and in the meantime to devote your energies to supporting Prof Milton Diamond's call for a moratorium.

First, let me explain my personal interest in this area. I was, at an early age (though not in infancy), subjected against my repeatedly expressed wishes to medical intervention to "normalise" my genitalia, a painful and distressing intervention which I now regard as an assault, and which was based on a misrepresentation to my parents of the medical evidence available at the time as well as on a denial both of my right to bodily integrity and of my right to decide my own destiny. Amongst my closest friends, there are several people who were also subject to such medical assaults: some of them have found the physiological and psychological consequences much more severe and enduring than I have done, and I regard myself as of the lucky ones, lucky to have escaped relatively lightly.

To the best of my knowledge, none of the persons on GIRES' executive committee nor any of its panel of medical "experts" has any similar personal experience: certainly, GIRES has not accorded the status of "expert" to any person on the grounds of such experience. Given the severely problematic nature of the issues involved, I find that a very serious omission which should cause GIRES to immediately desist from working in this area until it is rectified.

I want to plead with you to exercise great caution and restraint before proceeding with any substantive work in this field. One of the biggest problems in this area is that the conceptualisation by the "experts" of the ethical and medical issues at stake has long been at fundamental variance with that of those over

caution and restraint before proceeding with any substantive work in this field. One of the biggest problems in this area is that the conceptualisation by the "experts" of the ethical and medical issues at stake has long been at fundamental variance with that of those over whom they have exercised control. At the moment, GIRES appears set to repeat (no doubt with the best of intentions) the underlying error of previous approaches to the issue, by focusing on the judgements and assessments of medical professionals rather than on the right to self-determination of the people whose bodies may be irretrievably damaged.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees the "the right to life, liberty and security of person" (Article 3), and the right not to be "subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" (Article 5). The latter provision is echoed in Article 3 of the European Convention For Protection Of Human Rights And Fundamental Freedoms, yet both these rights are routinely denied to those of us whose bodies are medically altered against our wishes.

Far from acknowledging in any way the issues of self-determination, or the fact that the medical treatments imposed on intersex people are often perceived by the victims as "inhuman or degrading" and a violation of "security of person", GIRES' draft proposes that such people be subject to "medical management", a process within which decisions may be permitted to perform those treatments which may be perceived as assaults. This premise precludes consideration of issues of rights and liberties, and presupposes that it is legitimate for third parties to "manage" the lives and bodies of others in this case, of those who do not conform to narrow norms of sexual conformity.

Where does GIRES stand on this? Why has this question of power not been addressed and publicly answered *before* getting into the details of what procedures may be imposed on people, and in what circumstances? Why does your proposal imply that GIRES is working solely with medical bodies rather than with human rights groups or with legal experts or with ethicists?

Does GIRES not believe that there is a human rights angle to the process by which people are subject to mutilating medical procedures without their consent?

As long as these matters are considered within the narrow framework of "medical management", the fundamental issues of personal autonomy are structurally excluded from consideration: management, after all, is a process by which decisions are taken without a requirement of consent. Have you considered the possibility that the underlying problem facing intersex infants is precisely this process of "medical management"?

An alternative formulation such as "medical care" or "medical assistance" might provide a framework within which issues of self-determination could be given prime position instead of being relegated to the status of one of the factors involved in decisions made by others. I don't know whether "medical care" would be a concept which might allow for more rigorous assessment of the issues of agency and authority involved ... but I see nothing in any discussion of "medical management" which accommodates those issues. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that GIRES has merely used the language of the medics without examining with the people affected how the assumptions implicit in the language affect them, and without testing the assumptions of medicine against the tests offered by other academic disciplines.

For that reason, I see it as a matter of fundamental importance that before proceeding any further with the details of proposed work in this field, that GIRES steps back and considers whether it wants to continue to seek to have discussion of this issue treated as a technical matter for decision by medics, or as a broader question of rights and liberties.

In October 1998, Professor Milton Diamond called for a general moratorium on genital surgeries and sex reassignments performed on intersex children without their consent. Rather than rushing into the production of guidelines to define the circumstances in which such genital surgeries may per formed, why is GIRES not supporting the call for a moratorium? Why the rush?

The statement in the draft that GIRES is working with "UK medical bodies" implies that perhaps these complex questions of consent have already been answered by GIRES, or that they have not been addressed: but the question of who has a right to decide on these matters is not a mere point of philosophical debate. It is fundamental to the nature of the questions posed about such treatment and to the answers which it is 'possible' to obtain: it is the basis on which any guidelines could be built, not a distraction to be considered elsewhere or when you are less busy.

The failure to address these questions of power and authority, of legitimacy and rights, is reflected throughout GIRES' detailed proposals.

On a superficial reading, those proposals may appear attractive; but on closer examination they are full of danger. I have identified several areas in which they may actually create added perils for intersex infants, and others in which they would entrench some of the worst aspects of current practice.

Point G of the GIRES proposals suggests "safeguards to prevent avoidable damage to the patient's sexual functions". This sounds, on the face of it, a thoroughly laudable proposal, and is obviously very welcome to those whose sexual function might otherwise be impaired by cosmetically normalising surgeries. But it is regrettably simplistic, and overlooks the very serious problem that many intersexed people are subject to surgical intervention precisely to prevent such "avoidable damage" to sexual function, or to enhance it; yet even if technically successful those painful surgical processes may be designed to maintain a form of sexual function which the person concerned does not seek and may later bitterly resent.

(And your proposals nowhere address the widespread failure of such surgeries).

Such interventions are also practised on people whose conditions are not routinely described as "intersex". One such person I know was subjected to a series of surgeries in her youth to maintain the functionality of a penis which she had removed as soon as she could obtain vaginoplasty; others with undescended testicles are likely to find themselves subject to painful and scarring surgical procedures to preserve a form of sexual function they do not seek (and which may even be deeply repellent to them). Such people may also be subject at an early age to androgen treatments, the physiological consequences of which extend far beyond the sexual organs at which they are targeted. In both cases, there is a serious existential question at stake:

consequences of which extend far beyond the sexual organs at which they are targeted. In both cases, there is a serious existential question at stake: whether medical intervention is justified to produce a physiologically functional result when that functionality may in fact be the opposite of what the person themselves actually wants. Functionality is not the only possible good at stake here, and in some cases it may actually be undesirable.

That paragraph raises a further dimension which your proposals do not even address: the use of hormonal treatments on young intersex people. The more I examine the literature in this field, the more I realise how lucky I was to escape being subject to these procedures as a "cure" for the "abnormality" diagnosed in me: they appear to be much more widely used now than in the 1970s, yet I have seen no mention of such biochemical mutilation in anything GIRES has published on the subject. Is GIRES unaware of this practice, or does it see no problem with it? I am beginning to suspect that in focusing on surgical mutilation of intersex people, much of the discussion of this subject may have missed an even more widespread practice of repressive "medical management".

By what right does a process of "medical management" assert such control over people's destinies? How is a choice to be made between the possibility that a patient not given such treatment at an early age later regret it, and the possibility that those subjected to it will be scarred both by the physiological results and by the intense personal anguish caused by the knowledge that irreparable change has been caused to their bodies either without their consent or (as in my case) in the face of my explicit resistance? Those are not easy questions. But it is not enough to sidestep them by narrowing the framework to one of "medical management", an essentially technocratic approach which might seek to resolve such issues by the sorts of statistical analysis underlying the current fad for evidence-based medicine. An ethical or legal approach would question the right of such technocratic choices to be imposed; it would question whether any evidence can justify such intervention and how such evidence is to be assessed, and by whom. Where, in your consideration of these issues, are the lawyers and the ethicists? I see only medics.

Point D of the proposals, which advocates a "comprehensive multi-disciplinary assessment of each case" again implies that if only enough medical people are involved, a "correct" decision may be made. But what exactly is a correct decision in such a case? What are the parameters? Why is intervention apparently accepted without question as a legitimate possibility in certain cases if enough medical practitioners are involved? Why should such interventions not be subject to the approval of a court or to compliance with legal safeguards such as the test of "qualified and persistent informed consent" applied in Colombia following the recent High Court decision there? What research has GIRES done on the current state of UK law in this regard?

Maybe you intended to address this in point F of your proposals, which suggests a "presumption that, except in cases of compelling medical urgency, irreversible treatment will be delayed until the patient can give fully informed consent". This proposal is, I am afraid, staggeringly naive: in 'every' single case that I personally know of, such alleged "compelling medical urgency" has been the mechanism by which parents have been browbeaten into giving consent: in each of those cases, there was 'no' urgency, compelling or otherwise. This clause would in practice, undermine all the good intentions of your proposal: without externally-guaranteed safeguards such as those in Colombia, parents could continue to be bullied and misled into accepting a false diagnosis of urgency.

Point H considers "the information and advice which should be provided to the parents of such infants, including how to contact the specialised support groups", but there is no mention of the information that may be supplied to intersex infants themselves. In most accounts I have read by survivors of IGM the victim has been explicitly lied to about the procedure being done: does GIRES have a view on this? Do you regard it as acceptable that deceit should be a routine part of medical practice in this field, or merely as something too unimportant to mention? Or has GIRES not even thought of this?

You also omit any reference to third p guarantors who might ensure that informati is given fully and accurately, and offer nothin to the victims of such interventions, such as a guarantee of full and accurate medical records of what was done to them and why it was considered appropriate, and to privacy of such records for those who do not want them to be permanently attached to their medical files. (Such record-keeping is crucial if people are ever to find out the truth of such interventions, and it appears to be routinely omitted). GIRES sets out as one of its objectives the performance of research: what research has GIRES done about the accuracy and availability of such records, or even on the incidence of such treatments? What research done by others is it able to draw on?

Point I suggests a "requirement for long term follow up of each case into adulthood". Why is this presumed without question to be a good thing? It has obvious attractions, but for many people subject to such interventions, the process is destructive and degrading: the possibility of follow-up may merely prolong the intrusion, and given the bizarre theoretical frameworks within which such followup may be set, there is a very real possibility that such followup may actually cause further damage, and many intersex people and their families have actively resisted such followup. As one (minor) example of why this happens, consider the individual known to me who later told a medic of how the process had been destructive and was based on a misrepresentation of medical assumptions which subsequent research has shown to be incorrect, only to be told that "well you might have appreciated it if things had turned out differently". That merely repeats and replicates the severe injury already caused: it undermines attempts to repair the damage which can occur. Why is prolonged exposure to this sort of process raised by GIRES as an unquestioned good when many of the people concerned have sought to escape it? I have taken great care to ensure that my medical records from that period are unavailable: I very much doubt that I am alone in this.

By requiring long-term follow-up, those involved may actually find themselves caught in a much longer process of infringement of their autonomy, and at greater risk of further intervention against their will: the right to resist followup may be as important as its

cally been available. Given a benevolent medical system, that issue might not arise: but if the medical process was entirely benign, I doubt either of us would have devoted so much energy to the subject.

Even for research purposes, any followup such as that which you propose is likely to be deeply flawed, because those who resent the process will exclude themselves from it: there is ample evidence of how this skews the research results of the Gender Identity Clinics, where many of the numerous people who regard their treatment as abusive refuse any participation in follow-ups and try to put the nightmare behind them. Has GIRES considered the consequences of this, and examined ways of avoiding it? In referring to the "need" for followup, has GIRES merely assumed that followup is always a good thing, without testing that assumption?

Please, please, please ... rather than charging off into discussions with "UK medical bodies", will GIRES stop and take the time to examine 'openly' and at great length all the complex issues behind these treatments before starting to "agree" guidelines? There is much more to this subject than the consideration of when a knife may be wielded: there is a question of how such decisions may be made, by who, and against what parameters, and with what safeguards.

Agreeing (on behalf of who, I might ask?) guidelines with medical bodies without the participation of the people affected is not really agreement at all: it is a replication of the process of control which too many of us have been subject to at critical stages in our lives.

Despite your undoubtedly sincere intention to assist, GIRES' current approach risks perpetuating and reinforcing a pattern of systematically oppressive medical processes. It is not enough merely to answer 'my' concerns to *my* satisfaction: there are many thousands of people out there who have been subject to mutilating medical treatments in childhood, and whose perspectives will nowhere be reflected in the clinical literature, and of which we are both likely to be deeply ignorant: it is time for their voices to be heard. In research terms, this is an extreme case of a hidden population. Before setting out to set draw up guidelines, why does GIRES not seek to involve and learn from those who have been there before, and to consider the principles before setting out to build on uncertain foundations?

The principles underlying any attempt to improve the prospects for future generations of intersexed people at risk of medical assault primarily concern not the medical practitioners whose narrow "expertise" you have cast as paramount in this process, nor the parents whose right to information you usefully stress, but the *subjects* of such treatment. Even if the proposals you make lead to an improvement over the status quo, the continued marginalisation from the process of those affected will almost guarantee that new mistakes will replace the old ones.

The medical "expert" who you have recruited to advise you on intersex matters is someone who has publicly insulted transsexual people by comparing us all with "rubbish", and has declined invitations to retract that remark on the public record in his own words. The archives of the UKPFC-FORUM and PFC-DISCUSS mailing lists bear testimony to the offence that has caused, and to the widespread anger at GIRES's continued insistence that a secondhand reinterpretation of his remarks is a satisfactory substitute for a retraction or clarification in his own words.

(By the way, I use the word "expert" in quote marks here not because I question Prof Brook's medical skills, but because I question whether the field in which that expertise is situated is the appropriate one for the consideration of the ethical and legal issues which I believe should be starting point for reform in this area; and because I question whether, in view of his deep involvement in the status quo, his paradigms are the appropriate basis for seeking change. Professor Brook's recent reference in an article on the BBC website to AIS women as 'girls', in inverted commas, raises questions about his approach which need to be answered.)

When I have previously raised with you matters such as this about GIRES' approach to its work in a given area, you have told me that GIRES principles are publicly stated, and that you are too busy to engage in any further explanation. GIRES's principles are laudable but non-specific and do not answer any of the questions raised here. Nothing that you have published so far explains just why GIRES is pursuing these issues in this way, with such a focus on medical practitioners and with such determined exclusion of intersex people themselves. That is why I am sending this an open letter rather than private one: I hope that on this occasion, you will take the time to explore not just these question I have raised, but the many many more questions raised in such a complex field by the people who have, unlike you, had to endure genital mutilation at the hands of those who presume to "medically manage" them.

You now risk taking a much more serious step than that which you took in aligning GIRES with so controversial a figure as Professor Brook, one which may cause not just insult but very real injury. These matters are far too important to the lives of too many people for "guidelines" to be drawn up in haste by a small group with a narrow range of expertise, with principles which have never been stated.

Please, Bernard, please -- slow down. Please stop and take time to reconsider your approach *before* getting into confidential discussions of principle and detail with the people who bear the historical responsibility for a process which I know you abhor. Please help create some breathing space by supporting a moratorium to allow proper consideration of the issues 'before' drawing up new guidelines?

And, please, you will at least answer one question in this: why has GIRES not recognised from the outset the expertise in intersex matters of intersex people themselves, and acknowledged that expertise as the central and crucial resource required by its research panel?

Yours in hope rather than expectation,

Claire McNab

Gires Medical Research Panel Medical Management of Intersexed Infants

GIRES is working with the UK medical bodies to develop agreed guidelines for the medical management of intersexed infants that will deal inter alia with the following factors:

a - the impossibility of predicting or manipulating, with certainty, the eventual gender identity of any infant, whether intersexed or

bodies to develop agreed guidelines for the medical management of intersexed infants that will deal inter alia with the following factors:

a - the impossibility of predicting or manipulating, with certainty, the eventual gender identity of any infant, whether intersexed or not.

b - the need to make an early decision on gender for social purposes does not imply equal urgency for gender confirming treatment.

c - the consequences of the various errors which may be made in undertaking irreversible treatment of such infants.

d - the need for a comprehensive multi-disciplinary assessment of each case.

e - the conditions for which immediate irreversible medical treatment is a compelling necessity.

f - the presumption that, except in cases of compelling medical urgency, irreversible treatment will be delayed until the patient can give fully informed consent.

g - the safeguards to prevent avoidable damage to the patient's sexual functions.

h - the information and advice which should be provided to the parents of such infants, including how to contact the specialised support groups.

i - the requirement for long term follow up of each case into adulthood.

The charity will be pleased to receive comments on the above suggested factors: bernardgi@aol.com

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Defamation

<gain@tgender.net>.

Thank Procter & Gamble for dropping "Dr. Laura"

This week, Procter & Gamble, one of the nation's largest advertisers, announced it will not be making ad buys for the upcoming Laura Schlessinger television show. P&G said it was originally making the buys based on information that the Paramount Domestic Television-syndicated show's focus would be reasonable parenting. P&G reversed that position, issuing a statement saying, "As we've studied it more closely, we've decided it isn't possible to separate the broad range of Dr. Laura's opinions from the specific focus of this program." The company also said it would not renew its ad contracts for Schlessinger's radio program.

P&G, an industry trendsetter, passing on supporting Schlessinger's brand of defamation sends an important message that will reverberate throughout the ad industry.

GLAAD Executive Director Joan M. Garry said: "Make no mistake, this is huge. Other advertisers will follow Procter & Gamble's lead and will think twice about being connected with Schlessinger and her messages of intolerance."

P&G's reversal comes after several weeks of GLAAD working with P&G, including contacting its stockholders directly and working on a daily basis with members of its gay, bisexual and lesbian employee group in its efforts internally. GLAAD also reached out to community organizations, asking them to send e-mail alerts encouraging their constituents to write P&G and express concerns.

GLAAD now urges everyone to contact P&G and thank the company for its decision. As is to be expected, Schlessinger supporters are actively bombarding the company with negative comments. P&G needs to hear how much it is appreciated that it made the right choice.

Contact: Procter & Gamble, P.O. Box 599, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45201;

telephone: 1-800-331-3774; e-mail: http://www.pg.com/about/contact1.htm

GLAADAlert is the activation tool of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation

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Anything to Be Edgy

Brenda-Lana@blsmith.freeserve.co.uk

In recent years, Hollywood has worked hard to "push the sexual boundaries," or, in other words, remove any sense of mystery or savoir-faire that once defined that age-old dance between man and woman. Difficult as it is to believe today, in a bygone era, the movies actually left some things to the audience's imagination -- allowing these events to take place between scenes or after the fade-away. But this is the new millennium, dude, and imagination is, like, so dated.

Now, what other mysteries need removing? How about the mystery that occurs in relations between ditsy-but-harmless sitcom stars and "pre-operative transsexuals"?

This brings us to the set of the upcoming movie Metal God, where Friends cast member Jennifer Aniston has been busily pushing boundaries, although not with her co-star, Mark Wahlberg. If the involvement of Wahlberg (Boogie Nights) suggests that there might be an exploitative orgy scene, well, you guessed right. He plays "an office-supply salesman" who is recruited to be the frontman for a heavy-metal band (don't ask how). Aniston is his girlfriend. After a big show, the two wind up drinking heavily. Afterward, according to a source who spoke with the New York Daily News, "things descend into madness. There's a sea of writhing . . ."

Which must be where the pre-operative transsexual comes in. (The transsexual is female, at least for the time in question.) "Jennifer supposedly wanted to break out of her Friends character," the insider said. (Mission accomplished.)

Meanwhile over on the set of the popular teen series Buffy the Vampire Slayer, the same type of boundaries are being pushed. Alyson Hannigan's character (Willow), has proclaimed her love for fellow witch Tara (Amber Benson), and the two will continue to "enchant" each other, series creator Joss Whedon tells TV Guide Online.

Whed on initially had Willow and Tara cast a spell in a February episode, ina ceremony featuring candles, hand-holding and moaning. Employing a new definition of the word tasteful, Whedon described the scene as "sensual and physical, but by necessity, tasteful." In a recent episode, the screen went bank just as the two were about to smooch -- leaving the audience to guess what happened next.

So, there is some mystery left.

<gain@tgender.net>.